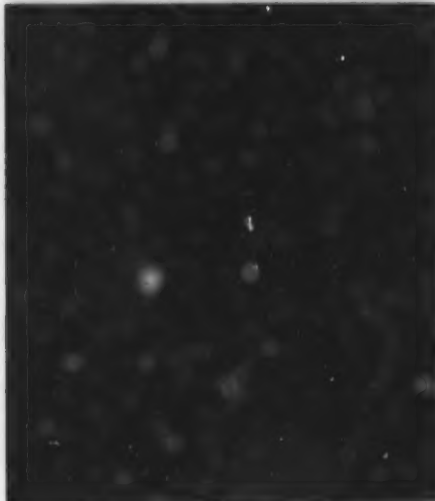


Get Ready Alberta

Strengthening
Alberta Advantage



Most Albertans will remember when the term "Year 2000" only seemed to show up in science fiction movies and wild predictions of the future. Today, that number stares at us from our calendars, our computer screens, and our daytimers. As hard as it is to believe, the 21st century has arrived.

And it's an exciting time for Alberta! At the beginning of this new century, Alberta is poised to take advantage of the opportunities presented to it. But Alberta can't move forward without a plan, a plan that recognizes the province's current and substantial strengths and anticipates the challenges of tomorrow. That's why the Government of Alberta is proud to present to Albertans this new economy strategy.

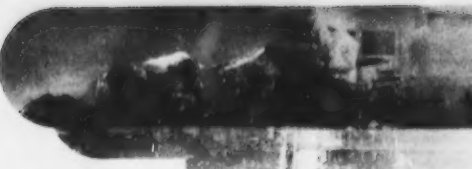
The strategy builds on the province's strengths and sets bold targets for moving forward by unleashing innovation, leading the world in learning, competing in the global marketplace and making Alberta the best place in the world to live, work and visit. It lays out a vision of the future in which Albertans are ready to meet the challenges of changing technology, the rapid growth of the Internet, a competitive global marketplace and the intense competition for investment and jobs.

Like the economy itself, this strategy is more than simply numbers on financial charts. A good economy is not an end in itself; it is the means by which a province is built of which all citizens can be proud – a province with a good school system, quality health care, modern infrastructure, a high quality of life, and a responsive set of social programs. That's why this strategy looks beyond the numbers and lays out a plan for today's and tomorrow's Albertans.

The strategy focuses on children and youth. Today's adults have had many opportunities to succeed, and now it's their turn to ensure that today's youth have those same opportunities. *Get Ready Alberta* talks about building a strong future for young Albertans, whether they're entering kindergarten, finishing school, or starting the first job of their new careers. These Albertans have their hopes and dreams in front of them, and this plan is about creating opportunity to help make those dreams come true.

Yes, fellow Albertans, that's the new century you see on your calendars. That means it's time for Alberta to get ready for the future. I am confident that this economic strategy, which will help shape future government business plans, presents a blueprint for tomorrow that makes sense to every Albertan. And remember: it's a government plan but it is only achievable when all Albertans work together to make it a reality. That kind of commitment has made Alberta a national leader, and I know that commitment will only grow stronger in this new century.

Premier Ralph Klein



three young Albertans ...

Laura is 23. She just finished a university degree in science and she's ready to take her first big step into Alberta's workforce. Her friends are in similar positions. Some are just finishing university. Others have taken programs at academic or technical colleges. They're all ready to get on with their careers and hope the right opportunities come along soon.

Max is 16 and in high school. He helps out on his father's farm and isn't sure what he wants to do when he finishes grade 12. He thinks getting a trade would be a good idea, but he's also interested in computers. He likes the idea of someday owning his own business. Max and his friends are thinking about their futures, and they know they need to get ready for whatever lies ahead.

Jennie is a curious five year old. Like the parents of every five year old, Jennie's parents have dreams for her future, and they hope there will be lots of opportunities for Jennie when she grows up. For now, they're working hard to give her a good start in life so she's ready for school and ready to succeed at whatever she tries.

Three young Albertans. Three dreams for the future.

These three young people are the future for our province. What kind of future do we want for them?

A future of boundless opportunity in a province that's unmatched.

To create that future, we need to be ready. Ready to compete in a new and quickly changing global marketplace. Ready to compete with the best and the brightest in a world where ideas and innovation will make the difference.

Today, Alberta is enjoying outstanding economic success. But this success does not guarantee boundless opportunity for the future. We need to look ahead and ask ourselves what's happening around the world, what risks and opportunities there are on the horizon. How do we make sure we're ready for the time when young people like Laura, Max and Jennie become the citizens of tomorrow?

That's what this new economic strategy for Alberta is all about. It's about looking ahead and being prepared. It's about getting ready today for a future of boundless opportunity for Albertans.



g from a strong foundation

Signs of a strong economy ...

260,000 new jobs were created since 1993.

Almost 140,000 new businesses were incorporated in the past six years.

Investment in manufacturing and service industries has more than doubled since 1993.

Alberta's Gross Domestic Product has grown almost \$20 billion over the past six years, a real increase of 26%.

Value-added exports have grown by 109% since 1993.

Alberta's business community, combined with thousands of hard working Albertans, young and old, have been the driving force behind the strength of the province's economy. And the results speak for themselves.

In the past few years, Alberta has led the country in economic growth. More Albertans are working than ever before. Alberta's unemployment rate has consistently been among the lowest in Canada. With a strong economy, more jobs and an excellent quality of life, more people are choosing Alberta as the place to live, work and raise their families.

Alberta's economy is also changing. Resource industries – energy, agriculture, and forestry – continue to be the backbone of Alberta's economy, but there's a lot more to the picture. Over the past ten years, we've seen significant growth in manufacturing, business and commercial services, tourism, and value-added industries like petrochemicals, forest products, food processing, electronics, and telecommunications.

The strong growth and diversification of the province's economy reflects the entrepreneurial spirit, hard work and determination of Albertans. It also reflects our ability to make choices and get the job done.

The government is playing its part by listening to the people and by creating the kind of positive business climate that promotes investment, growth and jobs.

Several important policy directions have guided us. In 1993, *Seizing Opportunity* set the province on a course towards fiscal responsibility and the development of the Alberta Advantage. A bold target of 110,000 new jobs was set – and exceeded. In 1997, the Alberta Economic Development Authority provided further directions for the development of the Alberta economy in *Building on the Alberta Advantage: People and Prosperity*, a human resource development strategy for the province, soon followed.

In the fall of 1997 the *Growth Summit* engaged Albertans in a province-wide discussion about priorities for action. At the same time, the Alberta Science and Research Authority developed *Sustaining the Alberta Advantage*, an innovation strategy designed to grow Alberta's knowledge-based economy.

Today, Alberta is in a strong position, but we can't be complacent. Across Canada and around the world, things are quickly changing. We need to take steps today to get ready for our future, and make sure we stay ahead of the game.



Ready



changing quickly

Alberta is not alone in shaping its destiny. We need to be ready to respond to trends around the world.

- **We're in a global marketplace.**

In today's world, anyone, anywhere can market their products, services, ideas and expertise around the world. People, investments and business can quickly move to wherever they get the best results.

- **Knowledge and skills are the key.**

Highly skilled, creative and innovative workers are in demand. In the past, people's economic security came from getting a good job, starting with a single company, working their way up, and eventually retiring. In today's economy, security will come from a commitment to keep on learning, and a determination to adapt, learn new skills and keep pace with a changing workplace.

- **The Internet and new advances in technology are changing everything.**

The world is literally at our fingertips. With the Internet, people can learn new ideas, develop their skills, search for information, develop a business, and buy and sell whatever they like without leaving their home. E-commerce is the wave of the future. Technology is changing how business gets done and how people learn. Not surprisingly, the information and communications technology sector is the world's strongest, fastest growing industry.

- **Knowledge and innovation are driving the marketplace.**

Ideas and creativity are replacing machinery and equipment as the primary drivers of success. This means the advantage goes to those who invest in research and development and have business managers, trades people, engineers, designers and others who can quickly transform their ideas into commercial products and services. The application of new technologies and innovation to Alberta's resource-based industries provides boundless opportunity to improve competitiveness, discover and develop new resources, further diversify the economy and increase value-added activities.

- **Investment depends on more than dollars.**

When investors look for places to invest, to expand or start a new business, they're looking for more than just a good return on their investment. They want to invest in places that provide an outstanding quality of life, with highly educated people, first rate educational institutions, a quality health care system, safe communities, and a range of arts, sports and cultural activities.

- **The balance between the environment and development offers opportunities and challenges.**

People are concerned about how to balance growth with the need to protect and sustain the environment. Albertans share those concerns with others around the world. Economic growth is important, but it has to go hand in hand with sustaining the environment.

Alberta leads the country in the percentage of households that regularly use computer communications.

Jobs in Alberta are not only growing, they are changing. Over the past decade, the professional, scientific and technical services industry sector generated 42,000 jobs, the most of any sector.



What do these trends mean for Alberta's future and the future for young people like Laura, Max and Jennie? It means we need to get ready.

- **Alberta businesses have to be able to compete with the best in the world.**

A small business in Okotoks can supply parts to a leading manufacturer in Britain. An advanced technology company in Edmonton can compete head to head with a similar company in the United States. But it means they have to develop leading-edge ideas and create a competitive edge.

- **Innovation will be our best advantage.**

Alberta has a tradition of innovation – whether it's in developing new crops or in finding ways to get oil out of the tar sands. Looking ahead, that drive to develop new ideas and new solutions will be key to our ability to succeed.

- **People need to get ready.**

The best advantage Albertans will have is their drive and their opportunities – to learn new skills, to test new ideas, and to apply new knowledge. Young Albertans like Laura, Max and Jennie have to be prepared for a future where learning doesn't stop. Albertans must embrace continuous learning.

- **Alberta needs to attract and keep the best and the brightest.**

In Alberta and across Canada, some of our best and brightest young talents are moving out of the country for better jobs and better advantages. We need to take steps, not only to keep those people here in Alberta, but also to engineer a "brain gain" that attracts leading scientists, researchers, and highly skilled workers to the province.

- **Keeping pace with research and development is critical.**

In a world where new knowledge and new ideas are the drivers of success, investment in research and development is critical.

- **Every sector of Alberta's economy benefits from new technology.**

Whether it's the energy business, agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, forestry or telecommunications, every sector has the opportunity to capitalize on new technology to improve its business, create a new advantage or develop new products to market around the world. Alberta has the potential to become a world-class centre of excellence in information and communications technology. As we work to find new ways of balancing the environment and development, Alberta businesses also have an opportunity to become leaders in developing and adapting environmentally responsible technologies and in marketing our expertise to the rest of the world.

Boundless opportunity in a province that's unmatched



with a clear vision

We know the kind of future we want for Alberta's young people – young people like Laura, Max and Jennie.

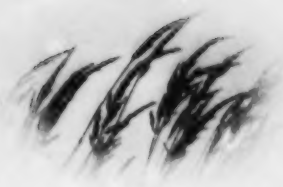
We want Laura to live in a province where ...

- She pays lower taxes than people in other provinces.
- Continuing investment builds strong business opportunities and more new businesses choose Alberta as the place to locate and grow.
- The company she works for does much of its business on the Internet. This allows them to compete, not only across Canada, but around the world.
- Laura and her friends learn more about the importance of innovative products, processes and organizations as ways to create their own advantages and a competitive edge for the businesses they work for.
- Ready access to the Internet means Laura can keep pace with changes affecting her company, find ways of expanding her company's business, and expand her own knowledge and skills.
- International experience and knowledge pays off. As Laura's company expands, she appreciates the customs and languages of several countries and can offer good advice.

- She lives in a community with quality education and health systems and an outstanding quality of life.

When Max is ready to enter the workforce, we want a future where he can expect ...

- His choice of going into the trades, through an apprenticeship, was a good one and he sees a productive career with a start-up business in his home community.
- New technology and access to high speed Internet connections allow him to upgrade his skills anytime, anywhere. It also has opened up new business opportunities in the community.
- New technologies, value-added products, markets and expanding exports are making his family's farm more viable.
- If he decides to farm, he'll have good information, access to the start-up capital he needs, and confidence that with a sound business idea, there will be no barriers to doing business across the country and around the world.
- Alberta's resource-based industries and value-added manufacturers are globally competitive and are looking to Max's friends to fill the jobs they are creating. Max's friends also have opportunities in new business ventures in telecommunications, information technology, environmental technologies, biotechnology, genetics, advanced materials, media and entertainment.

- 
- His personal income taxes are competitive with our major trading partners. The business he works for enjoys a solid business tax advantage as well. The provincial government continues to do its part by balancing the books and paying down debt.
 - His home community is stronger than ever, with more opportunities for him and his friends to stay in the community and the province. Max and his friends also have many opportunities to support their community by volunteering at the seniors' lodge, local theatre and community health and wellness centre.

When Jennie begins her career, we want a future where ...

- Jennie's education was second to none.
- Because her school system had high-speed links to other educational institutions, Jennie had the benefit of learning from leading-edge professors, researchers and instructors, not only here in Alberta, but also around the world. Growing up in Northern Alberta, Jennie enjoyed the same educational opportunities as any other student in Alberta.
- Alberta is known around the world as a leader in innovation, research and development. World-class researchers and scientists find Alberta the best place to do their work.
- Research and development has paid off in new technology and ideas that maintained the strength of Alberta's resource industries and value-added manufacturers and spawned a wealth of new industries across the province.
- New investment and new business ventures have moved to Alberta, expanding opportunities for Alberta's workforce.
- New advances in medical research and technology have resulted in new cures and treatments for diseases. Technology has also made it possible for better access to treatment across the province. Links to teaching hospitals around the world have allowed Alberta practitioners easy access to the most recent advances available. New prevention programs are having a positive impact on keeping people healthy and well.
- The province has balanced the needs of the environment and development, avoiding many risks to our environment and natural resource base.
- Jennie's community has benefited from continuing prosperity in the province. Arts and culture, sports and recreation, and a wide range of community activities make Alberta an outstanding place to live and visit.

Re





Vision means working together

Achieving the vision is not a job for government alone. Business and industry, schools, universities, colleges and technical institutes, municipalities and health authorities, researchers, technicians and people working in the trades ... all Albertans need to work together to make the vision a reality.

We need to start from these basics:

- Create the right environment. Government will continue to be fiscally responsible, balance budgets, set priorities, ensure excellent education and health services, promote Alberta and encourage investment.
- Maintain low taxes overall as a key component of Alberta's competitive advantage, with no direct incentives to specific businesses.
- Embrace the opportunities and challenges of participating in a global marketplace.
- Foster knowledge, innovation, research and technology across all sectors of the economy.
- Take steps to develop, attract and retain a highly skilled workforce, including leading researchers, scientists and knowledge workers.
- Ensure that Alberta has the necessary infrastructure to compete in global markets, including not only roads and highways, but also telecommunications, air and rail transportation systems.
- Balance economic growth with the need to be good stewards of Alberta's environment and natural resources for the benefit of future generations of Albertans.
- Recognize that Alberta's quality of life is one of our best advantages.
- Make sure all Albertans benefit from continuing prosperity in the province.
- Promote the sharing of skills, knowledge and experience between older and younger Albertans.



Paths to the future

Alberta's future economic strengths – and the opportunities for our children – will be built around four key directions.

1. Unleashing innovation
2. Leading in learning
3. Competing in a global marketplace
4. Making Alberta the best place to live, work and visit.

"We can't stand still. The government is committed to innovative new strategies to maintain and carry the economic momentum we have built to date. We are striving for reasonable, forward looking, achievable strategies."

Ralph Klein



Leading-edge scientists, researchers, knowledge workers and people with fresh new ideas will see Alberta as the place to be.

Alberta has led the country in the number of scientists and engineers as a percentage of its labour force for the past decade.

Albertans learned about the importance of innovation from our earliest days as pioneers in a harsh and sometimes unforgiving land. We learned to turn untamed land into fields of wheat, and wheat into high value-added processed food products. When existing tools or technologies didn't allow us to tap the potential of the tar sands, we developed new technologies. We've added value to our energy resources by establishing a world-class petro-chemical industry.

Innovation is not new to Albertans. But today, it's more important than ever. Increasingly, the ability of Alberta businesses and industries to compete will depend on their ability to lead in innovation – to focus on research and development, adapt new ideas, and take new products and services from ideas to the commercial marketplace. Alberta must continue to apply leading-edge technology to keep resource production competitive, and to create and expand value-added activities and services within the province. That applies to all sectors of Alberta's economy – our strengths in energy, agriculture and forestry, as well as new knowledge-based businesses.

GOAL

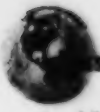
Alberta is a world leader in innovation, research, development and commercialization of new ideas.

Strategies

- Expand leading-edge research and development in the province
- Create an innovation and science culture, starting with Alberta's young people
- Develop a highly-qualified workforce to support innovation and science
- Encourage the innovative application of new technologies to resource-based industries to sustain future competitiveness
- Expand the manufacture and export of value-added products and services as a proportion of Alberta's overall economy and exports
- Expand the knowledge-based economy including the information and communications technology industry
- Develop the information and telecommunications infrastructure
- Minimize barriers to business innovation.

Targets 2005

- A provincial technology network that provides every home, business, classroom, library and municipality with access to a high-speed Internet connection able to support video and multimedia
- 35,000 new jobs in the information and communications technology sector
- Increase the current total research and development investment from the provincial government, federal government and industry to \$2 billion.



as for action

- Alberta's taxes will be competitive with leading countries and Canadian provinces in attracting and retaining research and development and knowledge-based businesses
- Create an advantage by developing and adapting environmental technologies and marketing Alberta's expertise to the rest of the world
- Actively recruit leading high-tech research and development companies to create clusters of expertise in biopharmaceuticals, agri-food, information technology and telecommunications
- Create centres of excellence in biotechnology, energy, and other areas where Alberta can build a competitive advantage
- Encourage young people to think about careers in science, research, information and communications technology
- Build a science culture by promoting new developments in science, research, technology and telecommunications
- Facilitate commercialization of research and new ideas
- Attract and retain leading-edge researchers, scientists and knowledge workers.

We'll compete by providing low overall taxes and access to the best people, ideas, expertise and infrastructure.

To be competitive in the global marketplace, Alberta's business community will have to rely more on its ability to link electronically to trading and business partners.

E-commerce is one way Alberta companies can use the province's advanced information and communications technology infrastructure to gain a competitive advantage in the new economy.





Learning

Albertans understand the importance of a good education. A good education and a healthy start in life are the most important tools we can give our children to prepare them for the economy of the future. By being leaders in learning, we can ensure not only that Alberta has an adequate supply of well-qualified workers but also that individuals have the skills they need to succeed in the marketplace and participate more fully in their communities and the Province's future.

GOAL:

All Albertans have the opportunities they need to learn, adapt and develop new knowledge and new skills.

Strategies

The best advantage we can give to young people like Laura, Max and Jennie is to make sure they get a good education.

Learning doesn't stop. Albertans have to keep learning new ideas and skills and be ready to adapt to a changing workplace.

- Provide Albertans with the best education system in Canada
- Ensure that pre-school children get a healthy start in life and a chance to grow, learn, and succeed
- Provide opportunities for Albertans to develop their skills, abilities and talents anytime, anywhere
- Attract and retain the best and brightest people
- Expand opportunities for people to re-enter the workforce.

Targets 2005

- 40% of Albertans participate in post-secondary education, up from 34% today
- 75% of students complete high school, up from 70% today

- 33% of students enrolled in a second language, up from 25% today
- 80% of all participants in training programs indicate they obtained an improved education or skill level.

Steps for Action

- Follow through on the Alberta Children's Initiative to promote healthy beginnings for young children and take care of children at risk
- Take steps to improve performance in schools and post-secondary institutions
- Increase opportunities for students to learn other languages and expand their understanding of cultures and countries around the world
- Use information technology to expand access to information on learning opportunities
- Promote "Campus Alberta" to support lifelong learning, where students enrolled in one post-secondary institution can take courses from any college or university in the province, either on-site or on-line from their homes or on the job
- Remove financial barriers to participating in post-secondary education programs
- Provide training and employment programs for people with disabilities who want to work and to help people move from welfare into the workforce
- Work with Aboriginal people and communities to enhance the well-being and self-reliance of First Nations and Metis people
- Support the creation of additional post-secondary learning opportunities in colleges, technical institutes and universities, including apprenticeship training, through the expansion of the Access Fund.



a global marketplace

To succeed, Alberta businesses and industries need to expand their horizons to compete, not only across Alberta and Canada, but around the world. As a province, Alberta has to compete aggressively in markets with other provinces, states and countries for investment and new business opportunities. Alberta must also continue to expand value-added activities by further upgrading of our energy, forestry and agriculture resources; and our architecture, engineering, business, education, tourism, transportation and consulting services in the province.

GOAL:

Alberta is internationally recognized as a good place to invest and do business. Alberta businesses compete and succeed in a global marketplace.

Strategies

- Maintain a competitive tax advantage and promote a positive business climate that stimulates and attracts investment activity
- Promote an integrated resource management strategy
- Develop and promote international trade and market opportunities
- Maintain and enhance Alberta's infrastructure.

Targets 2005

- 295,000 new jobs in the province, an increase of almost 20%
- Reduce Alberta's accumulated debt by at least 13%

- Increase value-added exports to \$26 billion, half of Alberta's total international exports, up from \$15.4 billion today
- Complete four-laning of the North-South Trade Corridor by 2007.

Steps for action

- Follow through on commitments to reduce personal income tax
- Make sure Alberta's business taxes are competitive both nationally and internationally
- Implement a new international strategy to strengthen Alberta's relationships with the United States and other countries around the world
- Reduce barriers to trade and investment across Canada and with other countries
- Increase Alberta's reputation as a dependable supplier of quality products and services
- Hold a forum to work with industry to chart the course for agriculture into the 21st century
- Develop an Alberta aviation strategy to improve air transportation for passengers and cargo
- Expand our telecommunications infrastructure to provide individuals and businesses across Alberta with an opportunity to access high-speed electronic linkages
- Develop a policy framework that supports a pipeline infrastructure allowing competitive access to the North American market while enabling value-added production of petro-chemicals in Alberta
- Encourage the application and adoption of new knowledge-based technologies as keys to best practices and competitiveness
- Promote e-commerce as a way to access new markets and remain competitive.

When Alberta businesses take their products to other states and countries, they'll know the doors are open. People will know about Alberta and what we have to offer.

Low taxes are important for Albertans. But they're important for all Canadians. We need to keep pushing the federal government to improve Canada's tax advantage.

Alberta the best place to live,

*By working together,
we can create a
quality of life that's
second to none.*

*Balancing Alberta's
environment with
development is
both a challenge
and an opportunity.
A challenge to
sustain what we
have for future
generations. But an
opportunity to build
expertise that can
be marketed to
the world.*

A key Alberta Advantage is a quality of life that is second to none. The primary objective of any economic strategy must be to improve the quality of life for all Albertans. The quality of Alberta's health and education systems; environment; communities; cultural, entertainment, and sports opportunities; and volunteer activities are all part of a unique package that makes Alberta an attractive place not only to live but also to visit, invest, and do business. Goals and strategies aimed at our economic well-being also support our social well-being and quality of life. They respond to an ever-changing world and increasing global competitiveness. They encourage innovation and learning. They maintain a receptive business climate. And they make Alberta the best place to live, work and visit.

GOAL

Albertans enjoy an unmatched quality of life in a province that's recognized as the best place to live, work and visit.

Strategies

- Alberta will be a leader in innovative approaches to wildlife and parks protection
- Maintain strong and viable communities
- Sustain a quality health system
- Promote the diversity and excitement of Alberta's culture, arts, sports and festivals
- Promote and encourage volunteerism in Albertans
- Partner with Alberta's tourism industry to deliver marketing programs and support services
- Alberta will be a leader in managing climate change issues.

Results 2005

- Tourism revenues increased to \$6.0 billion, up from \$4.0 billion today
- The percentage of Albertans rating their health status as excellent or very good continues to exceed the Canadian averages
- All Alberta municipalities are connected to the Internet
- Reduce Alberta's crime rate to below the national average
- Alberta's person-days lost due to workplace injury and illness, while continuing to be ranked among the three lowest of all provinces, will decline by 5%.

Plans for action

- Establish Climate Change Central, a public-private partnership to coordinate Alberta's efforts in reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Work with other provinces and the federal government to harmonize environmental regulations and processes and ensure a clear and predictable regulatory regime
- Continue the Municipal 2000 Sponsorship Program with targeted funding to specific municipal needs
- Promote regional economic development activities among municipalities
- Provide business planning advice and information to start-up businesses, especially in rural communities
- Promote innovative new approaches to providing health care and sustaining the health system
- Continue to support health and medical research, as well as promotion and prevention programs designed to help Albertans stay healthy.
- Work with communities to promote crime prevention strategies.



ready Alberta

Albertans have always been ready to take on new challenges and today is no different. We are well positioned to take on the future – with strong industries, capable people, and a positive attitude that says, "we're ready to take on the world." With a changing world and some clear challenges ahead, it's time to sharpen the edge and strengthen what we've come to know as the Alberta Advantage.

Laura, Max, Jennie, and all the young people across the province, are looking to us – to all of us – to get ready ... to build a future of boundless opportunity in a province that's unmatched around the world.

This economic strategy is just the beginning.



Your comments are welcome.
To provide feedback or for additional copies of this document contact:

Corporate Communications Branch
Alberta Economic Development
6th Floor, Commerce Place
10155-102 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L6

Tel: (780) 427-0670 To be connected Toll-Free: 310-0000 Fax: (780) 427-1529

Get Ready Alberta is also available through the Internet at
www.alberta-canada.com/getready

You can also provide feedback through Alberta Connects at www.albertaconnects.gov.ab.ca

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